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ARTHUR
CONAN DOYLE

The Hound
of the Baskervilles

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Arthur Conan Doyle

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Harper Press
An imprint of HarperCollins Publishers
77–85 Fulham Palace Road
Hammersmith
London W6 8JB

This edition published 2010

Arthur Conan Doyle asserts the moral right to be
identified as the author of this work

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN-13: 978-0-00-736857-0

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, St Ives plc



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Classic Literature: Words and Phrases adapted from
Collins English Dictionary
Typesetting in Kalix by Palimpsest Book Production Limited,
Falkirk, Stirlingshire

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History of Collins

In 1819, millworker William Collins from Glasgow, Scotland, set up a company for printing and publishing pamphlets, sermons, hymn books and prayer books. That company was Collins and was to mark the birth of HarperCollins Publishers as we know it today. The long tradition of Collins dictionary publishing can be traced back to the first dictionary William published in 1824, *Greek and English Lexicon*. Indeed, from 1840 onwards, he began to produce illustrated dictionaries and even obtained a licence to print and publish the Bible.

Soon after, William published the first Collins novel, *Ready Reckoner*, however it was the time of the Long Depression, where harvests were poor, prices were high, potato crops had failed and violence was erupting in Europe. As a result, many factories across the country were forced to close down and William chose to retire in 1846, partly due to the hardships he was facing.

Aged 30, William's son, William II took over the business. A keen humanitarian with a warm heart and a generous spirit, William II was truly 'Victorian' in his outlook. He introduced new, up-to-date steam presses and published affordable editions of Shakespeare's works and *Pilgrim's Progress*, making them available to the masses for the first time. A new demand for educational books meant that success came with the publication of travel books, scientific books, encyclopaedias and dictionaries. This demand to be educated led to the later publication of atlases and Collins also held the monopoly on scripture writing at the time.

In the 1860s Collins began to expand and diversify and the idea of 'books for the millions' was developed. Affordable editions of classical literature were published and in 1903 Collins introduced 10 titles in their Collins Handy Illustrated Pocket Novels. These proved so popular that a few years later this had increased to an output of 50 volumes, selling nearly half a million in their year of publication. In the same year, The Everyman's Library was also instituted, with the idea of publishing an affordable library of the most important classical works, biographies, religious and philosophical treatments,

plays, poems, travel and adventure. This series eclipsed all competition at the time and the introduction of paperback books in the 1950s helped to open that market and marked a high point in the industry.

HarperCollins is and has always been a champion of the classics and the current Collins Classics series follows in this tradition – publishing classical literature that is affordable and available to all. Beautifully packaged, highly collectible and intended to be reread and enjoyed at every opportunity.

Life & Times

About the Author

Arthur Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1859, the year Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published. He was raised a Catholic but declared himself an agnostic by the time he began reading medicine at Edinburgh University, in 1876. He attained his doctorate in 1885 having researched a condition caused by the disease syphilis, known as *tabes dorsalis* and characterized by the degeneration of sensory neurons so that the body malfunctions in various unpleasant ways.

Conan Doyle's professional life began with a stint as ship's doctor on a voyage around the coast of West Africa. In early 1882, before his doctorate was complete, he set up a surgery in Plymouth, England, with a university friend named George Budd. Unfortunately their professional relationship was short-lived and Conan Doyle found himself in Southsea, England, by the summer of the same year. He then established his own medical practise, but found that business was rather slow, so he worked on his writing, which he had enjoyed from an early age. By 1887 he had managed to publish his first Sherlock Holmes novel and steer his career in a different direction.

Between 1887 and 1927 Conan Doyle published nine Sherlock Holmes books; four novels and five collections of short stories. He wrote many other books, but Sherlock Holmes became such an iconic character in late Victorian and Edwardian England that his other works were rather overshadowed. In fact, Conan Doyle made the decision to kill off Sherlock Holmes in 1894. He had Holmes fall to his death with his archenemy Professor Moriarty in a short story titled *The Final Problem*. There was such a public outcry at the death of Sherlock Holmes that Conan Doyle was moved to bring him back to life in his third novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles* in 1902. He explained that Holmes had not actually fallen with Moriarty after all, but had let it be believed so in order that his other enemies were lulled into a false sense of security.

Conan Doyle suffered from considerable personal tragedy in the early years of the 20th century. A number of family members died, including his wife Louise, in 1906, and his son Kingsley in 1918.

There was also the horror of World War I to contend with, which affected the entire nation's morale, even as victors.

Despite his agnosticism, Conan Doyle developed an interest in spiritualism, becoming somewhat obsessed with beliefs in supernatural phenomena, including the Cottingley Fairy photographs, which are now known to be hoaxes. His obsession also caused a rift between himself and his friend, escapologist Harry Houdini. Conan Doyle couldn't accept that Houdini's escapades were elaborately planned tricks and Houdini grew vexed by Conan Doyle's insistence that he possessed magical powers.

He even wrote about his assertions in *The Edge of the Unknown*, published in 1930. It proved to be his last work, for he died of a heart attack in July of that year. He was 71 years of age.

The Influence of Science

One of Conan Doyle's better known *other* works is the science fiction novel *The Lost World*, published in 1912. A character named Professor Challenger, who would subsequently appear in a number of other stories, mounts an expedition to the Amazon basin in South America. He and his entourage encounter all manner of prehistoric animals along the way and witness warfare between an indigenous tribe and ape-men.

In context, this novel can be seen as a document of scientific enquiry at that time. The French science fiction author, Jules Verne, had died six years before, leaving an anthology of similar stories, including *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, 1864. Similarly, Conan Doyle's contemporary, the English author H.G. Wells, had published *The Time Machine* in 1895. These books all enabled the characters to visit other places in time and witness extinct creatures brought back to life. Evidently this general theme proved popular in an era when fossils and the processes of evolution were beginning to be understood by science.

Conan Doyle clearly used science to underpin his literature, although it is fair to say that he allowed pseudoscience to make an appearance towards the end of his life. His career straddled the turn of the 20th century when it was becoming apparent that scientific endeavour was dictating the ethos of the modern world. Sherlock Holmes was Conan Doyle's expression of his recognition that the application of empirical science and acute intellect were the things that members of the British Empire saw as the reason for their success.

Holmes was, in many respects, the personification of the superior British ego at that point in history. Conan Doyle himself became a part of the establishment due to his open support for British involvement in the Boer War (1899–1902). He was knighted in 1902 for services to his country rather than for his contributions to literature. In a pamphlet titled *War in South Africa: Its Causes and Conduct*, he justified the actions of the British fighting the Boers and was duly honoured for his conduct. Of course, his success as a novelist played its part, as his words on the war would not have been read by the nation had he not already become a celebrity.

Sherlock Holmes

Arthur Conan Doyle originally invented and wrote about the character of Sherlock Holmes to fill his time. Business was slow as a general practitioner on the south coast of England in 1882, so he took to writing as a means of occupying his mind. Five years later came the first published appearance of Sherlock Holmes, along with his faithful companion Dr. Watson, in a novel titled *A Study in Scarlet*. Then three years after that, in 1890, came his second *The Sign of Four*.

These books established Conan Doyle as a successful author and highlighted his approach to story telling. He had devised the detective mystery novel, which was considered a new genre at the time. Real life crime cases were not usually all that mysterious, but Conan Doyle recognised a need to elaborate for the sake of producing a good read, or a page turner.

It is worth noting however, that the case of the Whitehall Murders and Jack the Ripper had been prevalent in British newspapers in 1888, making the theme of mysterious crime solving very topical indeed. As a matter of fact, many of Conan Doyle's fans wrote to him suggesting that he have Sherlock Holmes attempt to solve the aforementioned crime, but the author was wise enough to realize that there should be no crossover between fiction and fact, so Holmes was never called upon in that regard. After all, had the real case been eventually solved then it would have left Holmes' reputation somewhat sullied.

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes was published in 1892. Six of the twelve stories are described as 'adventures' in their title, because they were originally published singly in the *Strand Magazine* and this provided a sense of continuity to the reader – what might now be termed 'product branding'.

The private detective Sherlock Holmes was, in essence, a hybrid between the Victorian gentleman scientist and the police detective. The Victorian era marked a historical point where science came into its own as a distinct discipline based on empirical experimentation. Before then, science had been rather more ambiguous in its definition, so that people tended to make the evidence suit requirements and desires.

Physicists, chemists and biologists had shown that the world always operates according to strict scientific rules and laws. It was this new phenomenon of scientific certainty that allowed Sherlock Holmes to confidently solve crimes in an age when police investigation was generally understood to be largely a matter of hit and miss, as much dictated by luck as the application of judgement. Although a fictitious character, Holmes revolutionized the perception of what could be achieved by way of identifying and collecting evidence from crime scenes, theorizing motives and courses of events and pinpointing suspects.

It suited the character development better for Holmes to be a private detective as he evidently possessed a quality of intellectual genius which, so often, is accompanied by idiosyncrasies and eccentricities that make for a personality ill suited to the routine and regulations of conventional employment.

To make Holmes believable as a character with an exceptional and extraordinary mind, he also needed to be flawed in certain ways, so the author made him something of a loner, with obsessive, fanatical and addictive traits. The result was a well rounded character that the reader could understand if not identify with, because he too had vulnerabilities and weaknesses common to us all.

In fact, Conan Doyle openly admitted that the greater part of Holmes was based on someone he knew. That someone was a Scottish university lecturer, Prof. Joseph Bell, who was a forensic pathologist. Conan Doyle had been impressed by the way Bell had implemented scientific analysis and detailed observation during post mortem examinations in deducing the cause of death. Although commonplace now, a forensic approach was something quite new in 1877 when they first met.

Conan Doyle commented that Bell's force of habit, or inculcation, was one of observation, inference and deduction, so that the most likely cause of death was arrived at by a methodical process of elimination. It was a mindset of reason, logic and the application of acquired knowledge; perfect for a successful private investigator.

The term *Occam's razor* is sometimes applied to Holmes' method, because it explains things by reducing, or razing options so that assumptions and conclusions can be made with a reasonable level of accuracy and confidence. Holmes was thus computer-like in his sleuthing ability, making him rather amazing to the ordinary mind.

At Sherlock Holmes' side in all of his investigations is Dr. John Watson, who acts as an enthusiastic deputy. He also narrates most of the Sherlock Holmes stories, so that the reader experiences events from a second-person perspective. In a later collection there are two stories narrated by Holmes himself, in the first-person, and one story told in the third-person.

Dr. Watson is intelligent in his own right, but he admires Holmes for his ability to think about things on a higher plane. It is notable that Holmes has no letters before his name, because he is a free thinker and rejects the notion of establishment and official credentials.

Similarly, Holmes has a rather condescending view of those employed at Scotland Yard, the police headquarters in London. Inspector Lestrade is a Scotland Yard detective for whom Holmes has mixed feelings. On the one hand he considers Lestrade to be the best detective in the force, but on the other hand he seems to only tolerate him because Lestrade is useful and efficient at dealing with the more mundane duties of making arrests and providing manpower when required. Clearly Holmes thinks of himself as being above the law, but in a good way.

One notable characteristic of Sherlock Holmes is his penchant for dressing in disguise. Conan Doyle saw that it would be useful for Holmes to be a master of disguise, so that he could access situations without the requirement for assistants who might otherwise do the job for him. In effect, Holmes becomes another character whilst in disguise, thereby allowing him to glean vital information by stealth.

In some ways, this was the forerunner to undercover police work, where detectives are expected to covertly gain the trust of criminals by pretending to be part of the gang or by observing from the sidelines. As a plot device it was useful for Conan Doyle to have Holmes assume different guises where necessary, to provide intelligence so that segue between elements of the investigation could be made.

THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES

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CHAPTER 1

Mr Sherlock Holmes

Mr Sherlock Holmes, who was usually very late in the mornings, save upon those not infrequent occasions when he stayed up all night, was seated at the breakfast table. I stood upon the hearthrug and picked up the stick which our visitor had left behind him the night before. It was a fine, thick piece of wood, bulbous-headed, of the sort which is known as a 'Penang lawyer'. Just under the head was a broad silver band, nearly an inch across. 'To James Mortimer, MRCS, from his friends of the CCH', was engraved upon it, with the date '1884'. It was just such a stick as the old-fashioned family practitioner used to carry – dignified, solid, and reassuring.

'Well, Watson, what do you make of it?'

Holmes was sitting with his back to me, and I had given him no sign of my occupation.

'How did you know what I was doing? I believe you have eyes in the back of your head.'

'I have, at least, a well-polished, silver-plated coffeepot in front of me,' said he. 'But, tell me, Watson, what do you make of our visitor's stick? Since we have been so unfortunate as to miss him and have no notion of his errand, this accidental souvenir becomes of importance. Let me hear you reconstruct the man by an examination of it.'

'I think,' said I, following so far as I could the methods of my companion, 'that Dr Mortimer is a successful elderly medical man, well-esteemed, since those who know him give him this mark of their appreciation.'

‘Good!’ said Holmes. ‘Excellent!’

‘I think also that the probability is in favour of his being a country practitioner who does a great deal of his visiting on foot.’

‘Why so?’

‘Because this stick, though originally a very handsome one, has been so knocked about that I can hardly imagine a town practitioner carrying it. The thick iron ferrule is worn down, so it is evident that he has done a great amount of walking with it.’

‘Perfectly sound!’ said Holmes.

‘And then again, there is the “friends of the CCH”. I should guess that to be the Something Hunt, the local hunt to whose members he has possibly given some surgical assistance, and which has made him a small presentation in return.’

‘Really, Watson, you excel yourself,’ said Holmes, pushing back his chair and lighting a cigarette. ‘I am bound to say that in all the accounts which you have been so good as to give of my own small achievements you have habitually underrated your own abilities. It may be that you are not yourself luminous, but you are a conductor of light. Some people without possessing genius have a remarkable power of stimulating it. I confess, my dear fellow, that I am very much in your debt.’

He had never said as much before, and I must admit that his words gave me keen pleasure, for I had often been piqued by his indifference to my admiration and to the attempts which I had made to give publicity to his methods. I was proud, too, to think that I had so far mastered his system as to apply it in a way which earned his approval. He now took the stick from my hands and examined it for a few minutes with his naked eyes. Then, with an expression of interest, he laid down his cigarette, and, carrying the cane to the window, he looked over it again with a convex lens.

‘Interesting, though elementary,’ said he, as he returned to his favourite corner of the settee. ‘There are certainly one or two indications upon the stick. It gives the basis for several deductions.’

‘Has anything escaped me?’ I asked, with some self-importance. ‘I trust that there is nothing of consequence which I have overlooked?’

‘I am afraid, my dear Watson, that most of your conclusions were erroneous. When I said that you stimulated me I meant, to be frank, that in noting your fallacies I was occasionally guided towards the truth. Not that you are entirely wrong in this instance. The man is certainly a country practitioner. And he walks a good deal.’

'Then I was right.'

'To that extent.'

'But that was all.'

'No, no, my dear Watson, not all – by no means all. I would suggest, for example, that a presentation to a doctor is more likely to come from a hospital than from a hunt, and that when the initials "CC" are placed before that hospital the words "Charing Cross" very naturally suggest themselves.'

'You may be right.'

'The probability lies in that direction. And if we take this as a working hypothesis we have a fresh basis from which to start our construction of this unknown visitor.'

'Well, then, supposing that "CCH" does stand for "Charing Cross Hospital", what further inferences may we draw?'

'Do none suggest themselves? You know my methods. Apply them!'

'I can only think of the obvious conclusion that the man has practised in town before going to the country.'

'I think that we might venture a little farther than this. Look at it in this light. On what occasion would it be most probable that such a presentation would be made? When would his friends unite to give him a pledge of their good will? Obviously at the moment when Dr Mortimer withdrew from the service of the hospital in order to start in practice for himself. We know there has been a presentation. We believe there has been a change from a town hospital to a country practice. Is it, then, stretching our inference too far to say that the presentation was on the occasion of the change?'

'It certainly seems probable.'

'Now, you will observe that he could not have been on the *staff* of the hospital, since only a man well-established in a London practice could hold such a position, and such a one would not drift into the country. What was he, then? If he was in the hospital and yet not on the staff, he could only have been a house-surgeon or a house-physician – little more than a senior student. And he left five years ago – the date is on the stick. So your grave, middle-aged family practitioner vanishes into thin air, my dear Watson, and there emerges a young fellow under thirty, amiable, unambitious, absent-minded, and the possessor of a favourite dog, which I should describe roughly as being larger than a terrier and smaller than a mastiff.'

I laughed incredulously as Sherlock Holmes leaned back in his settee and blew little wavering rings of smoke up to the ceiling.

'As to the latter part, I have no means of checking you,' said I, 'but at least it is not difficult to find out a few particulars about the man's age and professional career.'

From my small medical shelf I took down the Medical Directory and turned up the name. There were several Mortimers, but only one who could be our visitor. I read his record aloud.

Mortimer, James, MRCS, 1882, Grimpen, Dartmoor, Devon. House-surgeon, from 1882 to 1884, at Charing Cross Hospital. Winner of the Jackson Prize for Comparative Pathology, with essay entitled 'Is Disease a Reversion?' Corresponding member of the Swedish Pathological Society. Author of 'Some Freaks of Atavism' (*Lancet*, 1882), 'Do We Progress?' (*Journal of Psychology*, March 1883). Medical Officer for the parishes of Grimpen, Thorsley, and High Barrow.

'No mention of that local hunt, Watson,' said Holmes, with a mischievous smile, 'but a country doctor, as you very astutely observed. I think that I am fairly justified in my inferences. As to the adjectives, I said, if I remember right, amiable, unambitious, and absent-minded. It is my experience that it is only an amiable man in this world who receives testimonials, only an unambitious man who abandons a London career for the country, and only an absent-minded one who leaves his stick and not his visiting-card after waiting an hour in your room.'

'And the dog?'

'Has been in habit of carrying this stick behind his master. Being a heavy stick the dog has held it tightly by the middle, and the marks of his teeth are very plainly visible. The dog's jaw, as shown in the space between these marks, is too broad in my opinion for a terrier and not broad enough for a mastiff. It may have been – yes, by Jove, it *is* a curly-haired spaniel.'

He had risen and paced the room as he spoke. Now he halted in the recess of the window. There was such a ring of conviction in his voice that I glanced up in surprise.

'My dear fellow, how can you possibly be so sure of that?'

'For the very simple reason that I see the dog himself on our very footstep, and there is the ring of its owner. Don't move, I beg you, Watson. He is a professional brother of yours, and your presence may be of assistance to me. Now is the dramatic moment of fate, Watson, when you hear a step upon the stair which is walking

into your life, and you know not whether for good or ill. What does Dr James Mortimer, the man of science, ask of Sherlock Holmes, the specialist in crime? Come in!

The appearance of our visitor was a surprise to me since I had expected a typical country practitioner. He was a very tall, thin man, with a long nose like a beak, which shot out between two keen, grey eyes, set closely together and sparkling brightly from behind a pair of gold-rimmed glasses. He was clad in a professional but rather slovenly fashion, for his frock-coat was dingy and his trousers frayed. Though young, his long back was already bowed, and he walked with a forward thrust of his head and a general air of peering benevolence. As he entered his eyes fell upon the stick in Holmes's hand, and he ran towards it with an exclamation of joy.

'I am so very glad,' said he. 'I was not sure whether I had left it here or in the Shipping Office. I would not lose that stick for the world.'

'A presentation, I see,' said Holmes.

'Yes, sir.'

'From Charing Cross Hospital?'

'From one or two friends there on the occasion of my marriage.'

'Dear, dear, that's bad!' said Holmes, shaking his head.

Dr Mortimer blinked through his glasses in mild astonishment.

'Why was it bad?'

'Only that you have disarranged our little deductions. Your marriage, you say?'

'Yes, sir. I married, and so left the hospital, and with it all hopes of a consulting practice. It was necessary to make a home of my own.'

'Come, come, we are not so far wrong after all,' said Holmes. 'And now, Dr James Mortimer –'

'Mister, sir, Mister – a humble MRCS.'

'And a man of precise mind, evidently.'

'A dabbler in science, Mr Holmes, a picker-up of shells on the shores of the great unknown ocean. I presume that it is Mr Sherlock Holmes whom I am addressing and not –'

'No, this is my friend Dr Watson.'

'Glad to meet you, sir. I have heard your name mentioned in connection with that of your friend. You interest me very much, Mr Holmes. I had hardly expected so dolichocephalic a skull or such well-marked supra-orbital development. Would you have any objection to my running my finger along your parietal fissure? A cast of